

Healthy Pets Healthy People: An Internet Resource for Health Risks Associated with Pets

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Background The CDC website “Healthy Pets Healthy People” (HPHP), designed by the NCID Zoonoses Working Group, was launched in October 2002 to educate the public about health risks associated with pets and select wildlife. To direct further educational efforts, we sought to measure the amount of interest in the HPHP website.

Methods Analytical software was used to assess the number of times the HPHP website appeared on web searches (hits) and the frequency of visits (number of times an individual entered the website) from November 1, 2002 through August 31, 2003. Parameters of interest included: most common search phrase used to find HPHP, hits and visits per month, amount of time spent on the website, most frequently visited page and the most frequently downloaded document. Additional software was used to determine the location and domain of visitors.

Results In November 2002, during its first full month of operation, the CDC HPHP website received 344,325 hits and 31,337 visits. In the nine subsequent months, the average number of hits and visitors per month fell to 159,360 and 18,327 respectively, a ratio of 9 hits for every 1 visit. Overall, the site averaged 5,675 hits and 625 visits per day. The average time visitors spent on the site was 8 minutes and 35 seconds. The home page was the most frequently viewed page (91%). Visitors downloaded a poster entitled “Reptile Handling Steps” most often (average of 263 times per month). The most common search phrase used was “ringworm in animals.” In August 2003, people in 72 countries visited HPHP. The most active state and city were California and New York City respectively. Forty-one percent of visitors reached HPHP through commercial domains, 12% through educational domains and 4% through government domains.

Conclusions The Healthy Pets Healthy People website is a commonly used resource. Additional efforts are needed, however to increase the proportion of persons who visit the website when the site appears as a “hit.” Several goals have been set to make HPHP more attractive and user friendly including incorporating keywords into the website's code, correcting templates and adding graphics.